# The Roles of Mentor to Maintain The Ciputra University Students Business Sustainability

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## Abstract

Ciputra University is a private institution established with expectation to boost the economic rateof Indonesia. The graduates of Ciputra Universityare expected to become entrepreneurs with positive contributions for the country. The students are encouraged to start up their business in their second semester and to sustain their business until they graduate. Each business project is being assisted by a mentor to help the growth. However, fact showed that the number of sustainable business was small. This research aims to discuss about how to maximize the roles of mentor in order to maintain the Ciputra University students' business sustainability. The research was done qualitatively by implementing semi-structured interviews to eight respondents with three different criteria. The results showed that to become a mentor that can maintain the students' business sustainability, one must possess three aspects: an observant personality, a problem solver, and with years of experience.

**Keywords:** *Mentor, Business Sustainability, Start-up Business*

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a profession that is believed to bring the country's economy to be better. Kodrat and Christina (2015) mentioned that a country will have a good economic level if it has 2% of entrepreneurs compared to all the total population. Indonesia can indeed be regarded as one of the developing countries, yet fact shows that Indonesia does not sufficient number of entrepreneurs as shown in Table 1. Tabel 1 menunjukkanjumlahwirausahadaritahun 2011 hingga 2015.

**Tabel 1. Number of Entrepreneurs from 2011 to 2015**

| Year | Number of population | Number of entrepeneurs | Percentage |
|------|----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 2011 | 229.566.000 | 3.787.836 | 1,65% |
| 2012 | 231.675.000 | 3.822.624 | 1,65% |
| 2013 | 241.798.000 | 3.989.674 | 1,65% |
| 2014 | 248.450.000 | 4.099.424 | 1,65% |
| 2015 | 250.115.000 | 4.126.898 | 1,65% |

Source: kompas.com

From data shown in Table 1, it can be seen that the number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia is still 1.65% out of the population, has yet reached 2%. To deal with this, Ciputra University was established with expectation that the graduates of this university can boost the number of entrepeneurs in Indonesia.

Ciputra University is a private university in Surabaya established in 2006 which carries the dream of Mr. Ciputra as its founder, which is to have graduates as entrepreneurs who will bring positive contributions to the economy of Indonesia. One of its competitive advantages compared to other similar universities is to have Entrepreneurship as a compulsory course which is scheduled on every Wednesday. This entrepreneurship course is held simultaneously, and all students of Ciputra University must enroll in this course. This course is facilitated with mentors to assist students in all stages of business, starting from preparation and execution to business innovation.

Rollins and Nickel (2014) explain that the role of a mentor in business development is very significant since a mentor can provide many new insights and encourage students to successfully execute their business. Despite its significance, fact shows that only some of the students could sustain their business from the beginning stage (early semesters) until they graduated, as shown in Table 2.

**Tabel 2. Number of Sustainable Business**

| Batch | Number of Business in the Second Semester | Number of Business before Graduation |
|-------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2012 | 70 businesses | 11 businesses |
| 2013 | 81 businesses | 13 businesses |
| 2014 | 90 businesses | 25 businesses |

Source: Company Internal Data

Table 2 shows the comparison between the number of business that started in the first semester, and the number of business that kept on going before the graduation. The data imply that though the students were assisted by mentors during enrolling entrepreneurship course in every semester, the number of sustainable business was still small, while the other remained businesses separated and formed new business.

One of the goals of the *entrepreneurship* curriculum team at Ciputra University is to prepare the students so that they, after their graduation, are ready to run the business they have learned during their learning time at Ciputra University. However, sometimes the students have to deal with conflict happens during team work during learning. Often they fail to manage the conflict and separate, resulting newly formed and managed business that must restart its stages. Consequently, those students cannot achieve the learningobjective already preparedfor the course in that relevant semester because they must catch up what they lag behind in order to prepare themselves to manage their new business. Regarding this situation, Honig and Hopp (2016) state that a good start-up business is a business that has passed the 45-month period. Therefore, in this research, the researcher wants to explore the roles of mentor to maintain business sustainability of Ciputra University students.

## 2. Theoretical Review

### 2.1 Entrepreneur

Joewono (2013:10) explains an entrepreneur as someone with a desire to develop new business by maximizing the use of resources around him or her to be more profitable. Meanwhile, Suhardi(2011: 12) states that entrepreneur is someone who is skilled in running the skills and resources around him or her by taking different decisions from others in order to produce something more useful. These definitions emphasize the role of an entrepreneur as someone that takes advantage of the things around him for something more useful and to create new jobs.

Based on a book written by Kodrat and Christina (2015:5), growth of entrepreneur number of a country can improve the country's economic rate. The ideal country is a country with at least 2% entrepreneurs of the total population in the country (McClelland in Imawan, 2015).

### 2.2 Phases of Business Growth

According to Eijdenberg, *et al.* (2017), there are several phases of business growth, which are existence (start-ups), growth, maturity, decline, rebirth, and death. The phases are shown by Figure 1.
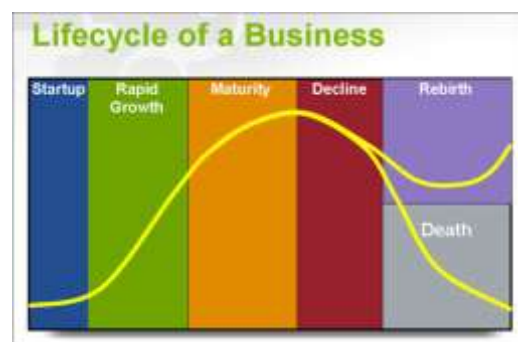


**Figure 1. Phases of Business Growth**
Source: https://frrl.files.wordpress.com

1. Start up

*Start*-up phase is a beginning phase of a newly established company. Eijdenberg, *et al.* (2017) state a newborn company should begin to apply four management functions, which are to establish its marketing systems, human resources, and production operations as well as finances. Jean (2012) says that the problems that often arise in the majority of newly established businesses are balancing the four functions of management. Jean (2012) adds that problem arising during phase often faced by most newly established companies is balancing those four management functions.

2. Growth

In this phase, companies tend to be more stable in the context of their operational terms. Eijdenberg, *et al.* (2017) explain that a company begins to experience financial increase and has a considerable amount of consumers. Problem arising in this phase is that the company owner begins to determine whether the capital must be focused on reaching the break event point or on doing asset

investment in order to achieve greater profits in the future.

3. Maturity

In this phase, a company is considered to reach stable condition of the four management functions. Sumandono and Haryadi (2014) also agree that a company in this phase focuses more on its four management functions, and as its result, the company can have a good segmentation, target market, and company positioning. Eijdenberg, *et al.* (2017) states that a company in this phase tends to do expansion in terms of market reach, add types of product, and many more. Problem that often arises in this phase is to determine the right strategy for implementing that expansion purpose.

4. Decline

This decline phase is sometimes experienced by long-established companies. Eijdenberg, *et al.* (2017) argue that a company needs innovations by observing its surrounding condition in order to bring its company position into rebirth phase. However, if a company cannot innovate and just tries to survive the decline phase, then the company slowly enters its death phase. Schwab, *et al.* (2017) in their researchalso state that conditions in the environment surely change over time, therefore a good company must continue to innovate by adjusting itself to the times.

## 2.3 Business Mentor

According to Allen (2015), a business mentor is someone who has sufficient business experience to help him or her in assisting others. Meanwhile, according to Rothwell and Chee (2013), a business mentor is someone who has sufficient knowledge and competence, and is committed to maintain growth of a managed business. They also explain about the criteria of a good business mentor, which are: caring for the growth and distress of his or her mentee, providing access tonetworking, and having experiences for the learning process, and most importantly is being a trusted person.

Hart (2010) explains several ways that are considered to be effective in the process of business mentoring. *Firstly,* is by maintaining and developing relationship between mentor and mentee. When both parties have good relationship, it will support their communication process. *Secondly,* is by providing new insights to the mentee. *Thirdly,* is by paying attention to the mentee's atmosphere and mood. At the time of the mentoring process, a mentor should be able to pay attention to his or her mentee's and

condition. *Fourth,* is by becoming an inspiring and exemplary role model for his or her mentee. *Fifth,* is to pay attention to the intensity of mentoring time. A good mentor should maintain his or her mentoring period intensity, not too close to his or her mentee to encourage the mentee'sindependence, yet not too far away to monitor the mentee's progreeson a regular basis.

## 2.4 Criteria of a Good Mentor

The followings are criteria of a good mentor according to Maxwell (2008) and Taylor and Crabb (2016):

1. To have a positive mindset that the assisted person will have same success rate with the others.
2. Be willingly involved with the problems that are faced by the assisted person.
3. Can and willingly contribute their time to the assisted person.
4. Possess a good leadership spirit.
5. Is experienced in assisting the mentees with their problems.
6. Is an exemplary role model.
7. Have good communication skills.
8. Is flexible and resourceful in approaching different parties.
9. Have good ways to foster the relationships with the mentee.
10. Have emotional intelligence and can professionally handling various problems.

## 3. Research Method

### 3.1 Research Approach

This research was qualitative in nature. Moleong (2013) says that qualitative researchis a research that analyzes its data descriptively or by words. The approach taken is directed to the background and the individual as a whole, therefore it is not permissible to isolate individuals or organizations into a variable or hypothesis but rather to treat them as part of wholeness. Bungin (2011) also says that in qualitative research it is not necessary to make hypotheses or make a generalization.

This study used semi-structured interviews. Bungin (2013) mentions that semi-structured interviews are interviews conducted by preparing guidelines for questions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted semi-structurally, which means that the questions may develop later provided that they are not independent of the main questions and research objectives and questions.

### 3.2 Research Subject

Martono (2011) explains that research subjects are people who are selected by a researcher to be studied and are able to provide information on a fact. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to select based on the criteria set by the researcher (Bungin, 2013). For this research, the researcher determined three criteria for selecting research subjects: owner of sustainable business, owner of broken business, and business mentor with years of experience.

**Table 3. Criteria for Informants**

| Initial | Category |
|---------|----------|
| SW | Owner of sustainable business |
| AG | Owner of sustainable business |
| KV | Owner of sustainable business |
| BR | Owner of broken business |
| TT | Owner of broken business |
| AC | Owner of broken business |
| NR | Mentor of student business |
| PM | Mentor of student business |

Source: processed data

The researcher put SW, AG and KV under a category of owner of sustainable business. Their points of views were very much required to explore the roles of mentor that assisted the students in the semesters to maintain their business sustainability. They were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Owner of a business that has sustained itself from 2nd semester to 7th semester at Ciputra University.
2. CEO of a currently-managed business.

Next, the researcher put BR, TT and AC under the category owner of broken business. Their points of views were very much required to enrich the information regarding the roles of mentor in a semester where the business broke or split. Criteria for selecting these three informants are as follows:

1. Owner of broken or split business, at least once during the learning process at Ciputra University.
2. CEO of previous business.

The last category used by the researcher is mentor of students business. The last category used by researchers is a student business mentor. The researcher selected NR and PM as the Ciputra University lecturers who were also the mentors of student business at that time. Their points of views were very important in order to explore the mentoring process and strategies used during mentoring their mentees. The criteria for selecting the informants are

lecturers of Ciputra University and have mentor experience for at least two years.

**3.3 Research Validity**

The researcher used data triangulation and *membercheck* to ensure the research validity. According to Putra (2011), data triangulation is a process of using two or more sources to get a complete picture of the comparative data obtained from informants. Putra (2011) also mentions that data triangulation is useful to find common ground of answers from the informants being interviewed. Membercheck, according to Sugiyono (2013), is a process of checking and confirming data obtained by researchers to the data provider, which aims to find out how far the data obtained are in accordance with what are provided by informant. Bungin (2011) also adds that the emphasis of membercheck method is to avoid ambiguity by adjusting the researcher's understanding with the statements given by the informants.

**3.4 Method of Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, the researcher adopted Miles and Huberman's steps of analyzing data as cited in Sugiyono (2013). The process is as follows:

1. Data collection as a first step to collect data by the researcher. This step was done by interviewing the informants.
2. Data reduction. This step was done to find out the main things and focus on the important things. Data reduction was presented narratively to simplify and clarify things that are found in accordance with the conditions of the research.
3. Data presentation. In this step, the reduced data were presented in accordance with the research conditions.
4. Data comparison. This step was done to see the connection among the obtained data for validity purpose. Additionaly, the researcher did membercheck as a method for data validity, thus the interview results were checked and approved by all parties being interviewed.
5. Conclusion drawing. This step was the last step conducted to answer the research question.

**4. Result and Disussions**

**4.1 Result**

Based on the interviews results, there are several important points that the researcher explores which are relevant to the efforts done

by the mentors to maintain students' business sustainability.

### An Observer

One important condition to become a business mentor is to have an observer attitude or or simply being referred to caring. According to SW, BR, and NR, a good mentor should be able to act as a substitute for the role of parents in an educational institution. A mentor should be willing to pay attention to his or her mentees' troubles and to get involved in helping them. Their statements are as follows,

> "well, as for myself, I am comfortable with lecturers that care about me and can act like my own mother or father… so I can share everything with them, nothing to hide, well I sure can trust them because they care about me" –SW

> "I myself want a facilitator that wants to take care of his or her mentee individually, not just to reach turnover and profit … Asking us to come only for doing report will definitely lose our intention to consult the business with our mentor". -BR

> "All this time during my mentoring process, I always consider my mentees as my own children, and I always treat them according to their needs since each of them surely has different personality."-NR

From their statements, the informants confirmed that a good mentor is supposedly to use various approaches and treatments both to the mentees and to the business. A good mentor will also know precisely when to focus more on the target and when to focus more on assisting students in dealing with their problems. These three statements from the informants confirmed that one important thing to do as a good mentor is to possess an observant yet caring personality.

### Problem Solver

Other important condition for a good mentor is to be someone full of ideas and a problem solver for the mentees when they are dealing with problems in managing their business. Regarding this, SW, AC, TT and PMstated as follows,

> "At that time, often when my team and I were stuck in a certain problem, well we had to consult it with our facilitators… indeed some of them helped us with ideas, and some of them asked us to think about it ourselves..hmm"- SW.

> "At that time I used to have many interesting business ideas, but because we experienced troubles in executing the ideas, we were confused and our facilitaors were not helping and not available at that time…because we were afraid the business would fail, we decided to change the business."- AC

> "Back in my early semester, I actually already had my own store, but because my facilitator only wanted us to target high turnover in order to win an award, we failed when dealing with problem, and so our business broke and split…"- TT

> "It is true that as a lecturer we must be able to lead students to be independent and think critical when managing the business, but surely when they are stuck in their problem we have to help them by giving them ideas"-PM

From these statements, the informants agreed that lecturers must be able to properly decide when to let their students think on their own whenever they have problems in order to make them more independent, and when to help them with ideas in order to keep their business develop.

### Experienced

Another condition that is not less important than the other two for a good mentor

when mentoring the mentees is having experience in the same field. This is revealed from the statements of AG, KV and NR.

> *"I was happy because I was assisted by facilitators who had experience in the same field with my business… we connected to each other because they ever experienced similar problems with mine"- AG*

> *"Since my second semester to seventh semester, I was handled by supportive facilitators with years of experiences, so I was having a fun time sharing opinions with them"- KV*

> *"At my place, we have a lecturer coordinator who places us as facilitators of business according to our respective fields and expertises, this is to support our mentor process to be more useful for the students.* **"-NR.**

All these statements of the informants confirmed that experience is an important required by a good mentor. If a mentor has many valuable and relevant experiences, he or she can assist the students in their problems by giving ideas, sharing opinions and experiences based on what he or she has been through.

## 4.2 Discussions

The researcher found several important aspects in relation to the role of mentor after conducting data analysis. To become a good mentor, one must have an observant or caring personality, full of ideas, and is well-experienced.

Entrepreneurship learning in Ciputra University is done once on a weekly basis. This entrepreneurship course consists of two sessions: lecturing and mentoring sessions. Each of business team is obliged to have mentoring session with their facilitator or mentor, at least once a week, where the team must report development and obstacles they face during managing their business project.

The interviews results revealed that a good mentor must care about the needs of his or her mentee. This is supported by Rothwell and Chee (2013)'s research results which claim that a good business mentor must care about the mentee's development and problem. However, the fact revealed in this research showed that not all mentors were willing to take care of their mentees' needs since they only focused on personal or team turnover. Furthermore, Hart (2010) states that a good approach between the mentor and the mentee can get them closer and maximize their performance. Every business team in Ciputra Universityhas its own needs and ways and to grow, thus a mentor must be able to find effective and efficient way to approach the mentee in order to assist them in managing and developing their business project. Moreover, the informants also expressed their wish that a caring mentor will encourage their sense of trust in their mentor, resulting confidence to consult their problems with the mentor. This is supported by Rothwell and Chee (2013) claim that a sense of trust in the mentor is an important factor to maintain a good relationship.

The second aspect derived from the interviews results is that a business mentor must become a problem solver. Hayes (2013) explains about someone with a problem solver personality means someone who can help others solve their problems. From the informants' statements, a mentor who is also a problem solver is very important to assist students who need assistance to solve their problems in managing their business. It is true that a good mentor is able to decide between when to let the students work independently and when to help them with their problems. Jean (2012) explains that problems mostly occur in a start-up business since in this phase, a start-up business must be able to balance between four management functions (marketing, finance, operational and human resources). Therefore, in this phase, a good mentor should have a good eye to observe the students' business situation to avoid failure.

The third aspect based on the interviews results is experience. Wahyudi (2012) confirms this by saying that experience supports the performance of an activity to become better than before. A mentor' experiences are very helpful for the students during mentoring process, especially if the mentor ever experiences similar problems. A mentor's experiences can become helpful reference or even solution for the students in dealing with their business problems. Regarding with this aspect, the learning process in Ciputra Universityrequires the lecturer coordinator to place lecturers as mentor of students with similar business projects with the mentor's respective fields and expertises. This is to make

sure that the students are really assisted by experienced business mentors. Zimmerman and Chu (2012) support this by claiming that experience is a priceless teacher in starting up a business, both in the context of mentoring and in the context of sharing knowledge and experience with the students who manage their business.

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis and discussions, the researcher concludes that in order to become a good mentor, there are three aspects to be developed in relation to the role of a good mentor to assist the students in developing their business. The aspects are as follows:

1. A caring observer. A caring and observant mentor is someone who does not only pay attention to the business target and development but also wants to being involved in dealing with the students' problem.
2. A problem solver. A mentor who is also problem solver is someone who willingly gives solutions to students with problems in managing their business. This kind of mentor must know when to let the students deal with their problems independently and when to help them with their problems.
3. An experienced mentor. This kind of mentor is someone with similar experiences with the mentees, so that he or she can assist the students to solve their problems and to manage the business.

### 5.2 Suggestions

1. To the institution, in the future, the institution must find a mentor with criteria that are already explained in this research, a mentor who is caring and observant, a problem solver, and with experiences for the sake of students' business project.
2. To future research, the next reseach topic worth to conduct is toselect informants from broken or split business in order to find more information on the causing factors of broken business, and to find out what aspects that need improvement.

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